COOPER-HEWITT MUSEUM

NINETEENTH-CENTURY
AMERICAN LANDSCAPE DRAWINGS

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Nineteenth-Century American Landscape Drawings

in the Collection of the Cooper-Hewitt Museum

The Smithsonian Institution's
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1790-1800 THE COOPER-HEWITT MUSEUM

Nineteenth-Century American Landscape Drawings

in the Collection of the Cooper-Hewitt Museum

"On my way a moment I pause,
Here for you! and here for America!"

Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* "Inscriptions" 1855

Cover:

Thomas Moran (1837-1926)

Cliffs of the Rio Virgin, Utah, 1873 (detail)

Watercolor, white gouache, over pencil

Gift of the artist

1917-17-20

Inside covers:

Winslow Homer (1836-1910)

Artists Sketching in the White Mountains, New

Hampshire, 1868 (detail)

Pencil

Gift of Charles Savage Homer

1912-12-263

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Foreword

The Cooper-Hewitt's collection of drawings is remarkable for its quality, size, and depth. Appropriately for a design museum, the major portion of the collection is devoted to architectural and decorative arts designs, largely Italian and French, and dating before 1825. It is somewhat surprising, therefore, that several thousand drawings by nineteenth-century American realist artists form an extremely important part of the collection. Nearly all of the significant artists of the century are represented in the collection, several by large numbers of drawings.

The founders of the Cooper-Hewitt collections, the Hewitt sisters, decided early in the twentieth century to form a collection of American drawings in deference to the wishes of their grandfather, Peter Cooper, who wanted to line the corridors and staircases of the Cooper Union School with pictures that would interest and inspire the students. In order to obtain drawings for the collection, the Hewitt family solicited various artists' families. The sisters' enthusiasm for the Museum, and the respect it enjoyed, proved to be persuasive. Winslow Homer's brother donated drawings, as did Frederic Church's son and William Stanley Haseltine's daughter, and the widows of Francis Hopkinson Smith and Samuel Colman. Thomas Moran donated eighty-four of his own watercolors. Without the Hewitts' efforts, this valuable archive would more than likely have disappeared.

This introduction to the Cooper-Hewitt collection of nineteenth-century landscape drawings has been made possible by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Wyeth Endowment for American Art. We are grateful for their support of this project and for their faith in the Museum over the years.

Lisa Taylor
Director

1. Winslow Homer (1836-1910)

Mountain Lake, about 1895

Black chalk, pencil, gray, blue and black wash

Gift of Charles Savage Homer

1913-18-4

"Give me the splendid silent sun with all his beams full-dazzling . . .
Give me a field where the unmow'd grass grows . . .
Give me nights perfectly quiet as on high plateaus west of the Mississippi, and I looking up at the stars . . .
Give me solitude, give me Nature, give me again O Nature your primal sanities!"

Walt Whitman
Leaves of Grass
"Drum Taps" 1855

Artists and novelists, poets and philosophers in nineteenth-century America exulted in the beauties of the American landscape. The contemplation of nature and the perception of man's relation to it was a dominating and unifying force for art, science, literature, and religion. The concept of nature was inextricably bound up with Christian concepts of God. Nature and God were one; God revealed himself through nature and was accessible to everyone in truly democratic fashion. The nation's vast, rich natural resources indicated that God's blessing had been showered on America as the chosen land; the virgin wilderness equaled the Garden of Eden.

Freshly independent and newly organized as an autonomous political entity, the entire country experienced a swell of nationalistic pride in the early years of the nineteenth century. The patriotic response to nature's bounty was summarized by Thomas Cole, a leading landscape painter, in the *American Monthly* of January 1836: "Whether he beholds the Hudson mingling waters with the Atlantic, explores the central wilds of this vast continent, or stands on the margin of the distant Oregon, the American is still in the midst of American scenery—it is his own land; its beauty, its magnificence, its sublimity, all are his; and how undeserving of such a birthright if he can turn toward it an unobserving eye, an unaffected heart!" Europe's domesticated, ruin-filled landscape seemed unexciting to most Americans, who compared it unfavorably to the uninhabited, virgin lands of home. An address delivered by the critic Richard Ray, to the American Academy of Fine Arts in 1825, voiced the prevailing parochial attitude: "Come then, son of art, the Genius of your country points you to its stupendous cataracts, its highlands intersected with the majestic rivers, its ranging mountains, its softer and enchanting sce-

nery. There, where nature needs no fictitious charms, where the eye requires no borrowed assistance from memory, place on the Canvas the lovely landscapes, and adorn our houses with American prospects and American skies."

America's national identity in the nineteenth century was largely dependent on its landscape. It was not only its greatest resource, it was the substitute for ancient traditional institutions. Yet most American painters felt a need to travel to Europe to study and observe—and to allay the underlying fear of being provincial. In Europe, Americans were drawn to seventeenth-century landscape paintings, particularly the work of Claude Lorrain, and to Dutch marine paintings. In Germany, they attended the Düsseldorf Academy to learn realistic rendering, and in France, they found an impulse toward realistic landscape painting gaining momentum, particularly in the work of Gustave Courbet. French artists turned to landscape and to the study of nature in the open air partially as a form of protest against the strictures of the academicians. One group of French artists, which included Jean-Baptiste Corot, Charles-François Daubigny, and Jean-François Millet, was associated with Barbizon in the Forest of Fontainebleau. They painted idealized landscapes or, more often, glorifications of rural life, barnyard animals, and peasants in the fields.

The American approach to landscape was always more direct and devotional than that of European painters. American painters surrendered to their magnificent landscapes with a complete suppression of ego. Reminders of man's status within the natural order were rarely included; if figures appeared in the landscape, they were usually seen at a great distance, often turned away from the spectator.

The close observation of nature was not confined to land-

2. Thomas Moran (1837-1926)
North Dome, Yosemite, California, 1872
Black wash, white gouache
Gift of the artist
1917-17-14

scape painters; American writers expressed the same interest in communion with nature. Washington Irving in the *Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and James Fenimore Cooper in the *Leather Stocking Saga* and *Last of the Mohicans* wove into their narratives sensitive descriptions of the New York State wilderness. Ralph Waldo Emerson in his essays on *Nature* and Henry David Thoreau in *Walden* revealed a worship of nature and a belief in the moral obligation it imposed on mankind. Walt Whitman observed, "I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey work of the stars." In *Thanatopsis*, William Cullen Bryant, a journalist and poet and personal friend of several Hudson River School painters, echoed the landscape painters' creed:

"Go forth, under the open sky, and list
To Nature's teachings, while from all around—
Earth and her waters, and the depths of air—
Comes a still voice. . . ."

The nineteenth century was America's age of discovery and growth. In 1803, when President Jefferson urged the purchase of lands west of the Mississippi, the prevailing attitude among government officials was that the Louisiana Purchase should be maintained as a territory of the thirteen original states. By mid-century, exploration and settlement of the West had so accelerated that the expansion of statehood had become inevitable. Beginning with the Lewis and Clark expedition of 1804 to 1806, the purpose of which was to search for a water route to the Pacific Ocean, exploration of the immense, uncultivated areas of the nation had become almost a national pastime. Ambition and curiosity stimulated explorers, cartographers, botanists, geologists, ethnographers, and illustrators to make long and hazardous journeys across the continent. Independence, Missouri, was the gathering point for the caravans of prairie schooners (smaller versions of the Conestoga wagons) drawn by oxen. The Santa Fé trail opened in 1821; the California and Oregon trails, in 1842. It took five weeks to Santa Fé, and five months to Sutter's Fort from Independence.

Those who chose not to make the journey were eager to learn about their exotic continent. Artists, and in the second half of the century, photographers as well, were regularly included in surveying parties and endured the risks and hardships of the trail along with the other travelers.

With the creation by Congress in 1838 of the Corps of

Topographical Engineers, systematic surveys of the lands west of the Mississippi were mandated by the government, but it was not until after the Civil War that the program moved into high gear. Between 1867 and 1879, there were four major geographical and geological surveys of large areas of the West. They were known by the names of their leaders: Ferdinand V. Hayden, who laid the foundation for the United States Geological Survey as it exists today, began in 1867 to survey most of Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, and Utah (the Indians called him "man who picks up stones running"); Clarence King established the fortieth parallel from Colorado to California; John Wesley Powell courageously pursued the course of the Colorado River (1869) and surveyed the Rocky Mountain Region (1871-78); and Lieutenant George M. Wheeler surveyed the territory west of the hundredth meridian (1871-79).

Scientifically oriented trips and expeditions for commercial purposes usually resulted in published, illustrated reports. The most important of these was the Pacific Railroad survey of 1853. The purpose of the survey was to "ascertain the most practicable and economic route for a railroad from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean." These reports, published in thirteen volumes and illustrated with tinted lithographs by various artists, are filled with zoological, botanical, and geological information and cost the government \$1,000,000 to publish.

George Catlin (1796-1872) was a remarkable artist who independently devoted much of his life to documenting the appearance of the West and its inhabitants. In his *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians*, Catlin provided a thorough description of the landscape he had traversed on a journey that included visits to forty-eight different Indian tribes. He was one of the first people to make a plea for preservation of lands in their natural state. In an article published in the 1830s entitled *A Nation's Park*, he pointed out: ". . . the further we become separated (and the face of the country) from that pristine wilderness and beauty, the more pleasure does the mind of enlightened man feel in recurring to those scenes, when he can have them preserved for his eyes and his mind to dwell upon." Another artist who voiced concern for the disappearing wilderness behind the advancing frontier was Thomas Cole: "There are those who regret that with the improvements of

3. Thomas Moran (1837-1926)
Toltec Gorge and Eva Cliff
from the West, Colorado, 1892
Watercolor, white gouache, over pencil
1917-17-31

cultivation the sublimity of the wilderness should pass away. . . . I cannot express my sorrow that the . . . ravages of the axe are daily increasing. The most noble scenes are made desolate and often times with a wantonness and barbarism scarcely credible in a civilized nation." Cole felt a mission to record and celebrate the wilderness in its virgin, untouched state. The great intellectual and emotional dilemma of progress versus preservation so much debated in the twentieth century already seemed insoluble in the nineteenth.

As the country prospered, the need for public parks was more frequently voiced. During the 1840s, the landscape architect Andrew Jackson Downing urged the establishment of parks. With his influence and Frederick Law Olmsted's devotion to the cause, lands were acquired in 1851 for Central Park in New York. Henry David Thoreau, in an *Atlantic Monthly* article in 1856, proposed that national preserves be established. Little was accomplished until near the end of the century when the naturalist John Muir found a political ally in Theodore Roosevelt, and legislation for park lands moved ahead more rapidly.

By the late 1850s, several artists were answering the call to explore and record the western wilderness: John Frederick Kensett in 1854, and again in 1857, 1868, and 1870; Albert Bierstadt in 1859 and subsequent years; and Samuel Colman, Worthington Whittredge, and Sanford Gifford, each of whom also made several trips. The completion of the railroad in 1869 simplified the journey and abbreviated the travel time dramatically. In terms of preservation, the most important artist was Thomas Moran, who probably more than any other painter was responsible for making the American public aware of its great natural heritage. He painted views of eight different areas that eventually became national parks and monuments: Yellowstone, Yosemite (figure 2), Zion, the Grand Canyon, the Grand Tetons, the Mount of the Holy Cross, Devil's Tower, and the Petrified Forest. Moran made his first trip in 1871 as an unofficial member of the Hayden expedition to Yellowstone. The following year, Hayden borrowed Moran's watercolors and sketches, as well as William H. Jackson's photographs of the area, to use in his argument before Congress for establishing Yellowstone as the first national park. In addition, Congress purchased Moran's large oil painting of Yellowstone for \$10,000, the first landscape painting acquired for the Capitol Building. Two years later, Congress appro-

priated the same sum to purchase Moran's *Chasm of the Colorado* (both paintings are now in the Department of the Interior). In tribute to Moran, and in gratitude, Hayden named one of the peaks in the Teton Range Mt. Moran.

Moran's letters to his wife and William H. Jackson's published reminiscences (*Appalachia*, September, 1938) describe conditions on the trail and Moran's fortitude in accepting the unaccustomed hardships of outdoor living. They slept in tents, and meals were prepared at the campfire. Moran was not an experienced horseman and had to resort to a pillow between his thin frame and the saddle. His equipment, like everyone's, was simple. A stiff portfolio to hold his paper supply doubled as a drawing board. One sketch showing a camp site on the Platte River is labeled "Camp Vexation," although no further explanation is given. A twelve-day journey in 1879 from Fort Hill, Idaho, for a closer look at the Tetons was plagued by hot spells, high winds, dust storms, and forest fires, a journey which Moran referred to as "dismal" and "an abomination." The lure of the incredibly colorful and dramatic landscape continued to work its spell on Moran, however, and he returned over and over again. He clearly shared the feelings of Ernest Ingersoll published in *The Crest of the Continent* (Chicago, 1885): "A few rods up the canyon a thin and ragged pinnacle rises abruptly from the very bottom to a level with the railroad track. This point has been christened Eva Cliff, and when we had gained its crest by dint of much laborious and hazardous climbing over a narrow gangway of rocks by which it is barely connected with the neighboring bank, our exertions are well repaid by the splendid view of the gorge it afforded (figure 3)."

Although in the course of the century the country was involved in three major military conflicts—the War of 1812, the Civil War, and the Spanish-American War—and numerous battles with the Indians, only rarely was any suggestion of political turbulence made, in landscape painting nor were most painters directly involved in the wars. Peace and tranquility, harmony and awe were the dominant characteristics of landscape pictures. Perhaps these serene and beautiful canvases were a form of escapism or, perhaps, tangible reassuring evidence of the New World's essential and enduring natural greatness. There were exceptions: Frederic Church's painting of the 1860s, *Banner in the Sky*, makes direct reference to the War between the States, and a number of brilliantly red canvases and others

of erupting volcanoes can be interpreted as emotion-filled allusions to the conflagration and heartbreak of the war. Winslow Homer spent the Civil War years with the Union Army providing illustrations of soldiers and army life for *Harper's Weekly*, and Jasper Cropsey, although he had actually lived abroad during most of the Civil War, made drawings for a projected painting of the Battle of Gettysburg.

The intrusion of industry and the machine into the nineteenth-century American landscape was also minimized. The locomotive and its tracks and the smoke stacks of factories were painted in minute proportions and seen at a distance.

Landscape painting reflected the optimism of the age, not its problems.

By the first quarter of the century, New York had become the largest city in the nation and the center of commerce. The opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 provided a direct water route between New York and the Middle West. The City also began at this time to assume prominence as the center of culture in the country. The National Academy of Design was founded in 1826 and quickly became one of the best art schools in the country. Artists were attracted to show in its annual exhibitions in order to take advantage of the concen-

4. Daniel Huntington (1816–1906)

Artists Sketching, Chocoma Pond,

New Hampshire, 1854

Pencil

Bequest of Erskine Hewitt

1942-50-161

5. Daniel Huntington (1816–1906)

Near Schooner Head, Mt. Desert Island,

Maine, 1856

Pencil, white gouache

on gray-brown paper

Bequest of Erskine Hewitt

1942-50-102

tration of potential buyers in this prosperous city. Many of the artists who lived in the city turned to the banks of the Hudson, among other locations in the countryside, for outdoor sketching. The misleading nomenclature “Hudson River School” has been applied to this group of nineteenth-century American realist landscape painters, although it was not geography that the painters shared, but a common approach: a commitment to paint landscapes in a realistic manner based on observation directly from nature (figure 4), but following compositional formulas established by the seventeenth-century European painters Claude Lorrain and Salvator Rosa. Asher B. Durand in his “Letters on Landscape Painting,” published in the art magazine the *Crayon* in 1855 and 1856, advertised the School’s philosophy in his advice to young artists. He impressed upon them the necessity of going to nature as opposed to staying in the studio; he glorified the beauty of the American landscape as opposed to foreign travel, and most urgently, he emphasized the vital importance of drawing. The general practice among Hudson River School painters was to travel in the summer making pencil, watercolor, or oil sketches from nature, sketching as they sat on a stool in the open air, an

umbrella, possibly, for shade, and a portable easel or drawing board for support. The drawings were used as reference in composing the larger, finished canvases in their urban studios in the winter.

By the 1820s, two painters, Alvan Fisher in Boston and Thomas Doughty in Philadelphia, were achieving success as dedicated landscape painters. Thomas Doughty (1793–1856) was twenty-seven years old when he was able to leave his business as a leather manufacturer in Philadelphia to become a professional painter. During the 1830s, he and his brother were partners in a lithography firm in Philadelphia; Doughty taught art in Boston as well, and also worked as a painter in Washington and Baltimore. He made two lengthy visits to England and Europe, settling finally in New York, where his last years were marred by ill health and a decline in success. Henry Tuckerman in *American Artist Life* describes Doughty’s paintings as graceful, delicate, soft, and silvery in tone. The compositions tend to be generalized rather than specific in subject matter, and appear to have been based on European prints or even existing paintings. A drawing in the Cooper-Hewitt collection pointedly-inscribed as a “study from nature”

6. Samuel F. B. Morse (1791-1872)
Brook and Trees, 1844
 Pencil
 Bequest of Erskine Hewitt
 1938-57-1012

7. Thomas Cole (1801-1848)
Imaginary Landscapes, 1830-1840
 Pen and brown ink, brown wash
 Gift of Louis P. Church
 1917-4-543, -532, -534, -531

indicates that at least on one occasion he drew in the open air. Typically, Doughty builds form in his drawings through short, parallel strokes of the pencil, but his rather tentative outlining results in a soft handling of the mass.

In general, artists were well informed of the scientific discoveries and theoretical developments of the time. Samuel F. B. Morse (1791-1872) moved freely between the worlds of science and art; his simultaneous careers as painter and inventor epitomized the nineteenth-century artist's intellectual breadth. He was born in Charlestown, Massachusetts, and after graduating from Yale College in 1810, traveled to England to study with Washington Allston. Eventually he established himself in New York, where he organized a drawing society to improve the study and teaching of drawing. The National Academy of Design was launched from this platform and Morse was the first president. Morse's early drawings are naive and awkward in the shaping of forms, but later sheets show a development of skills and a discriminating eye. In an 1844 study of trees now in the Cooper-Hewitt collection, the draftsmanship is sure. The foliage is suggested in broad, painterly terms, the means economical and unlabored (figure 6).

Eventually, Morse's scientific achievements, notably in connection with his invention of the telegraph, became more rewarding and remunerative than his artistic exploits, and he withdrew increasingly from the world of art. He is better known now for his portraits and panoramas than for his landscapes.

At the center of every artistic movement is a strong personality, an artist who is able to give the movement direction. In America, the man who led the way from history painting and portraiture to landscape painting was Thomas Cole (1801-1848). Cole brought a bold and vigorous attack and a vibrant, new vision to landscape painting. He was born near Liverpool, England, and worked there as an engraver before coming to the United States with his family in 1818. He continued to be employed as a wood engraver and then as a designer and draftsman for his father's businesses—a wallpaper factory in Steubenville, Ohio, and a floor covering factory in Pittsburgh. He began at this time to draw from nature, making meticulous, detailed drawings of trees, twigs, and branches. In 1823 he determined to make a formal study of art and enrolled at the Pennsylvania Academy in Philadelphia, where he was exposed to the landscape paintings of Thomas Doughty. In 1825

Cole moved to New York and took his first sketching trip up the Hudson River. The resulting paintings launched his career. The story goes that the three paintings were spotted in a shop window by the painters John Trumbull, Asher B. Durand, and William Dunlap, who recognized the young painter's ability, and each bought one.

Cole's river trip was the first of many that he made, and was followed by excursions to other locations equally "picturesque, sublime, and magnificent": the White Mountains, the Adirondacks, the Catskills, and in due course, England, France, Switzerland, and Italy.

Cole's importance in popularizing landscape cannot be underestimated. He found self-fulfillment in painting and drawing nature. He was a diligent draftsman and conceived his paintings in linear terms. The drawings run the gamut of styles, purposes, and techniques, but trees, sometimes wildly and anthropomorphically contorted, sometimes graceful, sometimes as dismembered limbs strewn on the ground in the shape of crosses, are so common a compositional element in the foreground of Cole's paintings as to be a signature. Pencil outline sketches of specific views formed the basis of compositions worked up in oils in the studio. Others of his

8. John Frederick Kensett (1816-1872)
Lake George, New York, Looking Northeast,
1850-1865
Pencil on buff paper
Gift of Paul Magriel
1961-43-2

9. Daniel Huntington (1816-1906)
Henlock, North Conway, New Hampshire, 1855
Pencil
Bequest of Erskine Hewitt
1942-50-39

drawings plot out an imagined idea. On occasion, he made a small drawn copy of a finished picture to provide himself with a record of it. Some topographical studies, rendered rather stiffly in pen and ink, were intended for engravings. Experimental and utilitarian rough, quick sketches were also part of his working method. Pen and ink or pencil were most often employed. The compositions were sometimes translated into oil sketches before the larger canvas was tackled.

Fifteen drawings in the Cooper-Hewitt collection are either examples of the drawn "snapshots" of finished pictures that Cole made for his records or thumbnail sketches of projected

paintings. Even within the diminutive size (the paper size is about 3½ by 4½ inches and the drawn area is as small as 1¼ by 2½ inches), they are amazingly complete and vital. The lines seem to be drawn with unleashed energy, the pen making vivid, sure movements on the tiny sheet. The artist depicts the most romantic of subjects—castles on lakes, palm trees and mountains, sailboats under drifting clouds (figure 7).

After Cole's untimely death in 1848, his friend Asher B. Durand (1796-1886) became the spokesman for the Hudson River School. Durand was born in New Jersey and chose to retire there in 1869. He studied in Europe, and lived in New

York, and he had been a successful bank note engraver and portrait painter before turning to landscape painting in about 1840. His paintings are pastoral scenes, unlike Cole's untamed wilderness vistas. *Kindred Spirits*, the most famous of his pictures, now in the New York Public Library, shows Thomas Cole and William Cullen Bryant standing together on a rocky cliff overlooking a vast valley. Their relationship with each other is dependent on the natural beauty they are contemplating and with which they are also in communication. Durand's strongly expressive drawings are among the most accomplished of the century. Trees were a favored topic, as they had been

with Cole, and are rendered in a combination of heavy, dark strokes of soft pencil, to create plasticity, along with an almost abstract, summary, light delineation of some areas—such as foliage—that is absolutely convincing.

Like Durand, John Frederick Kensett (1816-1872) began as an engraver of maps and bank notes in Connecticut and New York and did not turn to painting seriously until about 1840, when, in the company of Durand, John Casilear, and Thomas P. Rossiter, he sailed for a seven-year stay in Europe. The Continent attracted him a number of times during his life, and he traveled extensively in the American Far West as well.

10. Daniel Huntington (1816–1906)
*Peak of Mt. Chocoma, New Hampshire,
 Looking North, 1862*
 Pencil, white chalk on buff paper
 Bequest of Erskine Hewitt
 1942–50–146

11. Jasper Francis Cropsey (1823–1900)
Country Scene, 1847
 Pencil and white gouache
 on pale blue paper
 Gift of Mary Rutherford Jay
 1948–127–2

By the 1850s, Kensett's quiet, intimate views were much admired and imitated. In their undisturbed serenity and cloudless skies, Kensett's landscapes are similar in mood to the pastoral landscapes of his friend Durand. Kensett's compositions fall into four basic groups—the panorama, the vertical woodland interior, the view of the sea from the shore, and the water or mountain scene taken from a low vantage point. A drawing in the Cooper-Hewitt collection is of the last type and demonstrates the appropriateness of Kensett's drawing technique to the silent landscapes he chose to depict: gentle, even strokes, with an absence of heavy accents. His convention

for drawing foliage by using a spikey outline with points jutting out to represent leaves is also evident in the Cooper-Hewitt drawing (figure 8).

Daniel Huntington (1816–1906), a versatile and competent painter, was born and raised in New York, and had the opportunity to study with Charles Elliott, Samuel Morse, and Henry Inman. Portraits, history and religious pictures, genre paintings, as well as landscapes, were the products of his long career. Over one hundred landscape drawings in the Cooper-Hewitt collection bear witness to his fascination with nature (figures 5, 9, 10). They are atmospheric pictures of an airy and

tranquil world, rendered with a soft line, the space flattened and close to the picture plane.

In 1850, in the catalogue of an exhibition of his pictures at the New York Art Union, Huntington recounted the story of a commission earlier in his career. An enthusiastic speculator, plotting to erect a city on Verplanck's Point, "a wooded retreat of great beauty . . . ordered several views. During that summer, spent in the close study of nature, such a love of landscape was fostered as has often since broken out amid the harassing fatigues of portrait painting. . . . They are . . . hints and dreams of situations and effects which the visitor is be-

sought to look at lazily and listlessly, through the half-closed eye, and not to expect that truth and reality which should be found in the works of the professed Landscape Painter. . . ."

Jasper Francis Cropsey (1823-1900) was a landscapist who actively advocated the direct study of nature. In an address on *Natural Art* in 1845 he urged artists to "go to some of the grandest recesses in nature, such as is found in her mountains . . . go to her wild forests, and view those stately Hemlocks and unchanging Pines, or to her cultivated valleys and see her majestic oaks and aged chestnuts . . . view the angry, dashing and foaming waters—and that solemn grandeur that pervades

12. Frederic E. Church (1826-1900)
Landscape near Catskill, New York, about 1865
Oil sketch
Gift of Louis P. Church
1917-4-314

13. Frederic E. Church (1826-1900)
Coast at Mt. Desert Island, Maine, about 1850
Oil sketch
Gift of Louis P. Church
1917-4-645

the air, at evening, the unimaginable effects of light and shadow, and the great harmony of color existing everywhere . . . view them with an unprejudiced eye. . . ."

Cropsey was born on Staten Island and was launched upon his professional career with a five-year apprenticeship to Joseph French, a New York architect. At the age of twenty-one, Cropsey's abilities as a painter were already being recognized. He set off on a two-year honeymoon and artistic tour of Europe in 1847, and on his return, fell into the familiar pattern of making sketching trips through the Hudson valley and New England in the warm months and painting in a

New York studio in the winter. He moved to England in 1856 for a seven-year stay, but continued to paint American scenes there, establishing his preeminence as a painter of autumn landscapes. Back in America in 1863, perhaps for financial and patriotic reasons (he is known to have visited the battle site at Gettysburg), he settled in Hastings-on-Hudson.

During the 1860s and 1870s, Cropsey became more and more concerned in his paintings with effects of atmosphere and sunlight, especially at sunrise and sunset. Like their English counterparts John Constable and J. M. W. Turner, several American landscapists specialized in cloud studies. For Crop-

14. Frederic E. Church (1826-1900)
*Horseshoe Falls, Niagara, from
the Canadian Bank, 1856*
Oil sketch
Gift of Louis P. Church
1917-4-766A

15. Frederick E. Church (1826-1900)
Winter, Hudson, New York, 1870-1880
Oil sketch
Gift of Louis P. Church
1917-4-508A

sey, and for Frederic Church, the sky and clouds became a dominating element in their landscapes. Cropsey published an essay, "Up Among the Clouds," (*The Crayon*, 1855) that explains his preoccupation: "It will be difficult to name a class of landscapes in which the sky is not the key note, the standard of scale, and the chief organ of sentiment." Parallel investigations were taking place in the world of science which re-enforced this artistic interest. About 1849, Joseph Henry of the Smithsonian Institution began displaying daily weather maps, and by 1860 about 500 stations in the country were reporting to him.

Cropsey's rich legacy of drawings shows him to have had a hand of great proficiency. The drawings, usually in pencil and often on tinted papers, include architectural renderings, botanically correct plant studies, and panoramic or intimate views. Outlines are made with a fine, somewhat ornamental line, and the masses blocked in with sure, parallel strokes of a soft pencil. The drawings can be characterized as descriptive, with an abstract refinement of their own. A pencil drawing in the Cooper-Hewitt, a view of massive trees surrounding a gabled house, appears rearranged or seen from a different vantage point in two of Cropsey's oils (figure 11).

Acclaimed in Europe as the successor to Turner, and considered by his compatriots as the foremost landscape painter in America, Frederic Edwin Church (1826-1900) enjoyed unparalleled success at a remarkably early age. He had studied with Thomas Cole, whose tradition he extended. Church was born in Hartford, but after his two-year stint with Cole in Catskill, he established himself in New York, which he used as a base for his extensive travels. Towards the end of his life, he built a splendid home, eclectic in style, in Hudson, New York, with a grand studio and a fine panoramic view of the river and countryside, which provided endless subjects for his numerous

drawings and oil sketches. Church also turned to exotic, distant areas to celebrate the wilderness. His huge canvases illustrated his belief that science, religion, and art all pursued the same goal. He was the great synthesizer, and the last major landscapist who believed in the revelation of divine truth through painting. The tropical rain forests of South America and Jamaica, the icebergs of Newfoundland, the mountainous deserts of the Near East were the grist for his mill. In America, he explored the Hudson valley (figure 12) and the eastern seacoast from Maine (figure 13) to North Carolina. Other than Niagara Falls (figure 14), and the mountain ranges of

New York State and New England, he left the spectacles of this continent to others.

Church drew constantly, as an aid to his memory and to seize the appearance of the moment. The same curiosity that prompted Monet's series of haystacks at different times of day impelled Church's constant sketching. Beyond curiosity on Church's part was the spiritual search involved in the quickly penciled record or the carefully detailed botanical study. Church's landscape drawings are an expression of Ralph Waldo Emerson's realization that "a leaf, a drop, a crystal, a moment of time, is related to the whole and partakes of the

perfection of the whole" (*Nature*, 1836).

The penciled topographical drawings that Church used as the basis for his large paintings are filled with color notations, often poetically phrased, as "mountains, lovely blue overshadowed by clouds and streaked with shadows. . . . Snow thin on mountains, occasional brilliant gleam; Light on mountains like opalescent fire." The rapidity of execution in the field is described in the artist's journal of his trip through Syria: "We gazed down into a tremendous valley narrow but deep, at the bottom of which lay the silvery white bed of the torrents which yearly sweep the valleys. Gigantic mountains rose sub-

16. Frederic E. Church (1826-1900)
Clouds over Maine Woods, 1860-1870
 Oil sketch
 Gift of Louis P. Church
 1917-4-1354

17. William Louis Sonntag (1822-1900)
Carter Dome from Carter Lake,
New Hampshire, about 1880
 Watercolor and gouache
 Gift of William H. Matthews (from the
 Estate of Frederick A. Moon)
 1956-183-1

limely from the gorge. . . . We indeed were enchanted. I flung open my pocket sketchbook and drew the scene roughly, we dashed down the path and seized another view and so on sketching and running until we reached the narrow plain where the camels had long preceded us. . . ."

Church often combined pencil and white gouache on gray paper for the larger studies done out of doors; the white areas were the means of fixing in his mind the effect of the light and of describing the mass. Church is a master, even in hurried sketches, in the distribution of detailed investigation with summary blocking in of shapes. He has a clear understanding

of spatial relationships, and taken altogether, the consistent handling of the modeling, the light, and the space are totally convincing.

It was Church's practice to paint oil sketches (usually about 12 by 14 inches in size) which he used as the basis for larger paintings; but these small sketches are often complete enough to stand as finished works in their own right. In his cloud studies, although Church undoubtedly felt constrained to record the cloud formations and colors as accurately as possible, partly as a result of the urgency imposed by the rapidly changing subject, the application of the pigment to the board

18. Samuel Colman (1832-1920)
Oak Wood, Montauk, New York, 1880
 Pencil, pen and brown ink, blue
 wash, white gouache, on pale
 green paper
 Gift of Mrs. Samuel Colman
 1939-85-4

19. Thomas Moran (1837-1926)
Green River, Wyoming, 1879
 Watercolor over pencil
 Gift of the artist
 1917-17-39

is often extremely abstract. There is a definite progression towards abstraction in all the later studies (figures 15 and 16) in comparison to the early detailed renderings. The entire range of Church's drawings and oil sketches is contained in the Cooper-Hewitt collections, the generous gift in 1917 of Church's son.

The most prominent artists and writers of the nineteenth century tended to be clustered in urban centers on the eastern seaboard; even the great painters of the Rockies were easterners who journeyed west for that specific purpose. William L. Sonntag (1822-1900) was a landscape painter out of the

mainstream. He developed a personal style and individual palette in a highly professional body of work. He spent his early years in Pittsburgh and Cincinnati, and began his career as a painter in Ohio, Kentucky, and Maryland. His youthful experience included painting dioramas for a wax museum and two panoramas. He traveled in Europe between 1853 and 1855, living in Florence for a year. By 1857 he was living in New York, and the 1860s found him visiting New England for sketching sites (the battlegrounds of the Civil War had intruded onto his former sketching territories). He achieved his greatest popularity during this decade. Sonntag's compositions

typically were concerned with the edge of the American wilderness. Man's presence was suggested by means of stump-strewn clearings or shacks in various stages of deterioration. The shallow foregrounds filled with thickets, twigs, and bare branches were executed with dark, quick dashes of the brush—fragmented strokes—that conveyed the density and jumble of the wilderness. A watercolor in the Cooper-Hewitt collection (figure 17) shows rocks and pools painted in the opalescent, jewel-like colors that take Sonntag's landscapes a step away from reality. During the 1860s and 1870s, watercolors became more popular, and Sonntag was one of the most faithful expo-

nents of the medium.

An indication of the new-found respectability of watercolors was the formation in 1866 of the American Society of Painters in Water Colors (now the American Water Color Society). One of its founders was Samuel Colman (1832–1920), the son of a successful book publisher who had moved from Portland, Maine, Samuel's birthplace, to New York. His father's company had a reputation for publishing fine books with illustrations in color, and so it was not surprising that young Colman chose to study painting. He was fortunate to have as his teacher Asher B. Durand. The Hudson River and

Lake George, the White Mountains and other New England areas provided material for his outdoor sketching at first, but in the 1860s and 1870s, he traveled extensively in Europe as well. He took advantage of the completion of the Union Pacific Railroad to make several cross-country trips, and also made journeys to Mexico and Canada. In 1879, he became a partner in the New York interior design firm of Louis Comfort Tiffany, with which he shared a passion for Near and Far Eastern art. In the last decade of his life he spent more and more time in Newport, Rhode Island. He did little or no painting there, occupying himself, instead, with the writing of

two theoretical works, *Nature's Harmonic Unity* (1912) and *Proportional Form* (1920). An analysis of Colman's drawing style sheds understanding on his association with the Tiffany firm. Colman's line is undulating and ornamental; the shapes of tree foliage, for instance, are seen in terms of a beautiful pattern on the page, two-dimensional rather than atmospheric and plastic (figure 18). Besides landscapes and tree and flower studies, the seventy Colman drawings and oil sketches donated by Mrs. Samuel Colman to the Cooper-Hewitt collections include cattle and other animals, boats, and figures.

Watercolor specialists in America freely acknowledged their

20. Thomas Moran (1837-1926)
Index Peak, Clarks Fork, Wyoming, 1892
Watercolor, white gouache, over pencil
Gift of the artist
1917-17-69

21. William Trost Richards (1833-1905)
Mackerel Cove, Conanicut Island, Rhode Island,
probably 1885-1890
Watercolor, gouache, tempera on gray paper
Gift of the National Academy of Design
1953-179-1

debt to the English artist J. M. W. Turner. Thomas Moran (1837-1926) was no exception. He traveled to London in 1861 expressly to study Turner's works and later painted Turner-esque views of Venice. Moran was born in Lancashire, England, and emigrated to America at the age of seven. He studied in Philadelphia with James Hamilton, a leading seascape painter at that time. Following a second trip abroad in 1867, Moran turned his attention to the Far West, making several trips under various commercial and governmental auspices. In 1916 he moved permanently from Easthampton, Long Island, to Santa Barbara, California. It was at this time

that Moran gave eighty-four drawings and watercolors to the Cooper-Hewitt collections (figures 19 and 20).

Moran's reputation as an artist derives in large part from the splendid watercolors made during his western trips, although like his colleagues, Moran considered drawings and watercolors only as preparatory steps to composing his huge canvases. Rapid sketches in pencil, pen and ink, or pencil and wash, sometimes with color notations, were made on the trail. The vibrantly colored, finished watercolors were more than likely begun out of doors and completed in the studio. Moran depicted the West as a vast, romantic land of haunting and

22. William Stanley Haseltine (1835–1900)
Rocks and Trees, Mt. Desert Island, Maine,
 1860–1865
 Pen and black ink, watercolor
 Gift of Helen Haseltine Plowden
 1953–155–2

23. Homer Dodge Martin (1836–1897)
Mt. Marino
 Pencil
 Gift of Eleanor and Sarah Hewitt
 1931–73–209

idealized beauty. He used a technique that was broad and at the same time delicate. His capturing of atmospheric effects and panoramic visions within the small format of the watercolor sheets proves him to be a worthy disciple of Turner.

One of the most influential books for nineteenth-century realist painters was John Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, first published in 1843. Ruskin put realistic rendering on a plain of moral necessity: "Their [the painters'] duty is neither to choose nor compose nor imagine nor experimentalize but to be humble and earnest in following the steps of nature and the finger of God." An American artist who was profoundly in-

spired by Ruskin was William Trost Richards (1833–1905). Richards's commitment to truth in nature resulted in drawings that are remarkable in their exact precision and faithful description.

During his early years, Richards had worked in Philadelphia as a designer of ornamental metalwork for the firm of Archer, Warner and Miskey, manufacturers of gas fixtures, chandeliers, and lamps. By 1850, however, he became a student of Paul Weber, a German-born portrait and landscape painter from whom he learned the meticulous graphic technique that from then on characterized his style. Richards also

admired J. M. W. Turner and Thomas Cole (in 1853 when vacationing in the Catskills he made a pilgrimage to Cole's home and grave). In 1854, Richards was commissioned to paint a view of Mt. Vernon, and its success brought him patrons and enough money to travel to Europe again and again throughout his life. At home, his time was divided between a farm in Chester County, Pennsylvania, and a succession of houses at Newport, including one on Conanicut Island in Narragansett Bay. Among the 200-odd drawings and watercolors by Richards in the Cooper-Hewitt collections, the large, finished watercolor of Conanicut is the most imposing

and accomplished work (figure 21). The qualities of space, light, and atmosphere at the seashore inspired in Richards a greater lyricism and luminosity than did botanical or geological subjects.

In the last decades of the century, a number of American painters lost their intense nationalism and turned to European artists for instruction and inspiration. Two who did were William Stanley Haseltine (1835-1900) and Homer Dodge Martin (1836-1897). Like William Trost Richards, Haseltine studied with Paul Weber in Philadelphia. Haseltine, however, attended the Düsseldorf Academy in Germany, as well.

24. Winslow Homer (1836-1910)
Setting a Squirrel Trap, probably 1855
 Pencil and green, brown, and gray wash
 Gift of Charles Savage Homer
 1912-12-268

25. Winslow Homer (1836-1910)
Shore with Clouded Sky, about 1890
 Black chalk
 Gift of Charles Savage Homer
 1912-12-198

After working in New York for a period of eight years, he spent all but four of the remaining thirty-four years of his life as an expatriot in Rome. Haseltine's early drawing style reflected the descriptive technique of Richards and their teacher, although his studies of rocks in the drawing of Mt. Desert in the Cooper-Hewitt collection (one of several drawings by the artist in the collection) are broader and more summary than Richards's geologically correct delineations (figure 22). In the 1880s, Haseltine's style approached that of the Impressionists in his involvement with the effects of gentle light on outdoor subjects.

This shift away from the descriptive realism of the Hudson River School painters to impressionism can also be seen in the work of Homer Dodge Martin (1836-1897). Martin was raised in Albany, New York, where he studied briefly with the sculptor Erastus Dow Palmer and with James McDougal Hart, a partner who had trained at the Düsseldorf Academy. Martin moved to New York City in 1862 and stayed until 1881, when he went to Europe for nearly six years and came under the influence of Whistler and the Barbizon School. In 1893 he moved to St. Paul, Minnesota, hoping that the climate would help his failing eyesight. Martin evolved a personal style as a

landscapist, based not on direct observation of nature but on his reliance on memory. His drawings and paintings exhibit a strong predilection for wide, well-balanced spaces, with expanses of clear, bright, still water. Not a ripple, not a flutter of leaves, not a cloud in the sky disturbs the serenity of the Cooper-Hewitt drawing (figure 23). Martin's later works are significantly loose and vague.

Winslow Homer (1836-1910) has been characterized as the greatest pictorial poet of outdoor life in America. In the directness and originality of his vision, and the immediacy of his approach, he was able during his long career to capture

and record some of the variety of the American landscape—the cultivated countryside (figure 24), the virgin forest of the fishermen and woodsmen, and the Atlantic sea and coast. Homer apparently received little or no formal training in art. He began his career working for a lithographic firm in Boston and then became a free-lance illustrator for weekly magazines. In this capacity he was sent to the front by *Harper's* as an artist/correspondent during the Civil War. It was good training; he developed the ability to observe and record quickly, and to depict in the most telling way, and, in the process, his drawing skills improved. Following the war, Homer made the first of

26. Winslow Homer (1836-1910)

Tree Roots, Prout's Neck, Maine, 1885-1890

Charcoal, black and white chalk on gray paper

Gift of Charles Savage Homer

1912-12-90

27. Francis Hopkinson Smith (1838-1915)

Pool in the Woods, 1875

Watercolor, white gouache, over pencil on buff paper

Gift of Mrs. F. Hopkinson Smith

1923-41-24

two visits to Europe. His exposure to the paintings of Courbet and Manet brought about a lightening and brightening of his palette, even though his work remained literal and restrained.

Homer settled in New York, summering in the Adirondacks or New England. In 1881 he traveled again to Europe, this time to spend over a year in a small seaside town on the east coast of England. His drawing style loosened; hard edges and flat passages gave away altogether to rounder, softer modeling, the forms more enveloped in atmosphere. He began to draw almost exclusively in charcoal and watercolors. The subject matter of his pictures also changed from anecdotal, genre

types to direct observation of nature. The sea, the forest, and the mountains became his models. The intensity and vibrance of his Adirondack watercolors of hunters in the deep woods or fish swimming in dark, gleaming pools of water have no equal in the way depth and tone are built up in this difficult, watery, transparent medium.

The last two decades of Homer's life were spent on the seacoast at Prout's Neck, Maine, except for winter visits to more kindly climates and fishing trips with his brother in the Adirondacks and Quebec (figure 1). Prout's Neck, about twenty-five miles from Portland, provided him with exactly

the environment he preferred. (It was mainly the contents of this studio—drawings, some watercolors, and oils—that Charles Savage Homer gave to the Cooper-Hewitt Museum after his brother's death.) From the studio balcony, Winslow Homer had a magnificent, unimpeded view of the ocean; he also had a shack on a rise of ground above Saco Bay beach that commanded a fine view of the water and a flat sweeping terrain unlike the rock cliffs near his studio. It was in his contemplation and depiction of the sea itself that he achieved the synthesis between observation and composition, the world outside the picture and the world of the picture in harmony. He

seemed never to tire of drawing the sea; he studied every detail of wave, water, rock, vegetation, and weather change. When asked if he did not agree that beauty exists in nature and has only to be reproduced, he answered: "... you must not paint everything you see. You must wait, and wait patiently until the exceptional, the wonderful effect or aspect comes." It is an indication of his larger vision that his discrimination and preoccupation with details did not interfere with the grandeur of the whole when he set it down on paper or canvas. The freedom and understanding that his art brought him is evident in the relaxed, agile execution of the late char-

28. Francis Hopkinson Smith
(1838-1915)
Rock Cliff, 1878
Charcoal, black and white chalk,
on gray paper
Gift of Mrs. F. Hopkinson Smith
1923-41-1

29. Francis Hopkinson Smith
(1838-1915)
Echo Lake, Morning, 1878
Charcoal, black and white chalk,
on gray paper
Gift of Mrs. F. Hopkinson Smith
1923-41-2

coal drawings, whether the subject is transitory—a coming storm—or stable—tree roots (figures 25 and 26).

An artist whose aims and reputation were framed on a smaller scale was Francis Hopkinson Smith (1835-1915), a man of many talents, who bridged the world of science and the arts. He was a mechanical engineer by profession. Born in Baltimore, he clerked in an iron works as a young man. His engineering credits are impressive: he built the sea wall around Governor's Island, New York, another at Tomkinsville, Staten Island, the Race Rock Lighthouse off New London, Connecticut, and the foundation and pedestal in New York harbor

for the Statue of Liberty. He studied art in New York under Robert Swain Gifford, and in spirit, technique, and approach Smith's work, like his teacher's, is close to that of the Barbizon School painters (figure 27). He was a voracious writer; his stories and essays, many of which he illustrated, fill a twenty-three-volume collection. In an essay entitled *Outdoor Sketching* published in 1915, Smith explained that he had never made a studio picture and that his pictures were begun and finished at no more than three sittings, and often at one. He claimed that his studio equipment consisted entirely of a white umbrella, a three-legged stool, his paper, watercolors, and char-

coal. He went on to say, "The requirements are thoughtful and well-studied selection before your brush touches your canvas; a correct knowledge of composition, a definite grasp of the problem of light and dark, or, in other words *mass*, a free, sure, untrammelled rapidity of execution and last . . . a realization . . . that it takes two men to paint an outdoor picture; one to do the work and the other to kill him when he has done enough."

Smith was an artist who practiced what he preached, and the thirty watercolors and charcoal studies in the Cooper-Hewitt collections show his total understanding of each medium. Although they are clearly well planned and solid in execution,

the sensibility is poetic (figures 28 and 29).

As the turn of the century approached, landscape painting fell into disfavor. America was caught up with the urban concerns of the industrial revolution, and some of the public were disillusioned by its effect on the American wilderness. During the last two decades, however, a re-evaluation of nineteenth-century American realistic landscapes has taken place. It is to be hoped that the change in attitude is in part an increased sensitivity to the need of preserving what is left of the wilderness these artists painted and drew so lovingly and honestly.

Elaine Evans Dee
Curator of Drawings and Prints

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